

15.

ON
CRIMINAL ABORTION;

A

LECTURE INTRODUCTORY

TO THE COURSE ON

OBSTETRICS, AND DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

University of Pennsylvania,

SESSION 1854-5.

BY

HUGH L. HODGE, M. D.

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At a meeting of the Medical Class of the University of Pennsylvania, held Oct. 16, 1854, Mr. William Cook, of New Jersey, being called to the Chair, and Mr. W. K. Fort, of Alabama, appointed Secretary: On motion, it was resolved that a Committee be appointed to carry out the intention of the meeting, consisting of one from each State, Province, and Country, as follows:—

G. W. L. CARR,	<i>Alabama.</i>	CHARLES HODGE, JR.,	<i>New Jersey.</i>
O. T. HUNT,	<i>Arkansas.</i>	E. C. CORYELL,	<i>New York.</i>
EBER HESTON,	<i>Delaware.</i>	W. T. MACNAIR,	<i>North Carolina.</i>
S. R. WILLIAMS,	<i>Florida.</i>	THOMAS W. CARRITT,	<i>Nova Scotia.</i>
JOS. JONES,	<i>Georgia.</i>	R. A. O'BRIEN,	<i>Ohio.</i>
ZACCHEUS TEST,	<i>Indiana.</i>	S. PRESTON JONES,	<i>Pennsylvania.</i>
C. B. TALBUTT,	<i>Kentucky.</i>	J. BROWN GASTON,	<i>South Carolina.</i>
W. T. MILLER,	<i>Louisiana.</i>	R. B. BERRY,	<i>Tennessee.</i>
BRADLY TYLER,	<i>Maryland.</i>	WM. D. WOODEND,	<i>Virginia.</i>
JAMES D. HEWETT,	<i>Massachusetts.</i>	R. D. MAZARREDO,	<i>Cuba.</i>
J. NEWTON HELM,	<i>Mississippi.</i>	CHARLES GRÉBÉ,	<i>Germany.</i>
JULIAN BATES,	<i>Missouri.</i>	AUGUSTUS T. STAMM,	<i>Prussia.</i>
A. H. CHANDLER,	<i>New Brunswick.</i>		

CORRESPONDENCE.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
October 20, 1854.

DEAR SIR: We, the undersigned, have been deputed by the Medical Class to ask a copy of your Introductory Lecture for publication. This task we cheerfully perform, and heartily uniting in the request,

Remain yours, respectfully,

JOS. JONES,
JULIAN BATES,
WM. T. MACNAIR,
JAMES D. HEWETT,
RICHARD A. O'BRIEN.

To DR. H. L. HODGE.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
October 27, 1854.

GENTLEMEN: The Introductory Lecture which you, on the part of the Medical Class, have so politely requested for publication, was delivered to the Class of 1839, and by them was printed.

The subject presented is, however, of so much practical importance to the moral character of the community, that I will submit it once more for publication, in an amended condition, under the hope that it may, in some degree, rectify erroneous and prevalent views, as to the value of the life of the “fœtus in utero.”

With thanks for your politeness,

Respectfully yours,

HUGH L. HODGE.

MESSRS. JOS. JONES, JULIAN BATES, WM. T. MACNAIR, JAMES D. HEWETT, RICHARD A. O'BRIEN,
Committee.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL CLASS:

THE revolution of another year furnishes the Professors of this University the pleasure of witnessing these halls crowded with intelligent and cultivated youth from all portions of our extended country.

We bid you welcome. We hail you as the devoted and enthusiastic cultivators of a science, which, however difficult and complicated, deservedly ranks among the most exalted pursuits to which the human mind can be devoted.

The science of medicine, in every respect, is important and elevated: whether we regard its objects—the health and lives of human beings; its cultivators—many of them individuals of the first talents and the most exemplary morals; the difficulties of attainment—requiring attention, diligence, perseverance, self-denial, and the continued exertion of mind and body for a series of years; or the amount of literary and scientific knowledge which it imperiously demands for its proper cultivation; calling, as it does, to its aid all sciences and all knowledge; receiving assistance from the Geologist, who surveys the earth and penetrates its deepest recesses; from the Astronomer, who walks among the stars and suns of other systems; from the Chemist, who deals with atoms; and from the Metaphysician, who attempts to grasp the subtleties of mind, and elucidate the operations of our spiritual existence. The superiority of our profession is illustrated, not only by the talents and excellences of its cultivators, and by the variety and extent of the knowledge required, but, and here it dreads no comparison, by the practical benefits which it constantly confers on the community.

It is not my present object to portray these benefits. If time

and opportunity allowed, minute and interesting illustrations might easily be given of the beneficial influences of medicine. You might be conducted to the secret chamber of suffering; to the public hospitals overflowing with human misery; or to the battle-field, that *aceldama*, that field of blood, where the ingenuity of man has been successfully exercised in the mutilation and destruction of his species; and in all, and each of these, you might witness the alleviation or the relief of pain, the arrest of disease and death, the returning health, and strength, and beauty which attend the scientific and experienced physician, and which proclaim the benevolent and beneficent influences of the healing art. And even when success is denied, when disease and death prove conquerors, and, amidst manifold trials and suffering, man passes away from this world to the next, how divinely does the medical practitioner administer comfort to mind and body! how greatly does he alleviate suffering! how gently does he support his confiding patient to the borders of that grave from which he would have gladly delivered him.

There is, however, another aspect in which our profession is to be viewed, which has not been sufficiently regarded, and which enlarges, even to an indefinite degree, the number of those blessings of which it is so prolific. Allusion is made to its capability of preserving health, and of preventing disease and death; in other words, to *hygiene*.

As a disciple of Hygiea, the physician becomes the guardian of the health and lives of the community. He takes cognizance of the various direct and indirect causes by which disease may be introduced into private dwellings, hospitals, jails, ships, armies, cities, and countries; he points out the *juvantia*, as well as the *laudentia*—what will benefit, as well as what will injure. He discourses scientifically, as well as ethically, on the advantages of temperance in meats and drinks; on the influence of a pure atmosphere; on the importance of exercise, whether passive or active, in the city or the country; of cleanliness, of bathing, clothing, temperature, &c.

He investigates and points out the influence of the mind on the body; the necessity of regulating the exercises of the intellectual powers; of restraining and guiding the warm affections of the heart; of checking the still warmer and more threatening ebulli-

tions of passion. In short, everything which can by possibility injure human health or life, becomes the subject of his reflections, and enables him to proffer advice beneficial to society.

Such general considerations might be enlarged upon and suitably illustrated; but let us, for the present, apply them to that department of medical science which I have the honor to represent in this University.

The science of Obstetrics has more immediate reference to the process of parturition in all its varieties, whether natural or unnatural—simple or complicated.

This function (for it is truly physiological, belonging to healthy, not diseased actions) is by far the most complicated and dangerous of the female economy. It has reference, also, not merely to the act of delivery, but to the whole period of gestation, and to the condition of the woman for some time after parturition. Of course it must take cognizance of the temperaments and constitutions of females; of their peculiarities; of their fitness, or even of their capability to bear children; and how far this capability is injured or destroyed by prior disease or accident.

Obstetrics, moreover, is distinguished by the interesting fact that the welfare of two individuals is involved in every case of pregnancy and parturition. Hence the practitioner of Obstetrics has his duties and responsibilities necessarily enlarged. He must regard the infant, as well as the mother, from the period of conception to delivery; and generally is called upon to be its medical attendant during the first few weeks or months of its independent existence.

Hence, the diseases of women and infants are usually committed more exclusively to his care; and, in accordance with the views just presented of the duties of the medical practitioner, he must call on all the faculties of his mind, all the resources of his knowledge and experience, to prevent as well as cure their diseases; yea, at all times, and on all occasions, to watch over their physical interests, that life and health may be preserved, and every corporeal faculty be perfectly developed. He appears as the *physical guardian* of women and their offspring.

Under this representation of the subject, the elevated character and the immense importance of obstetric science to the welfare of a community, must at once be apparent. On former occasions, I

have urged this subject on the attention of my pupils; alluding to the past and present unaccountable neglect of this branch of medical science, and insisting on its inherent superiority and its practical bearings. I endeavored to exhibit these truths, by pointing out the physical and intellectual character of the female sex; noticing the peculiarity of her anatomical and physiological developments; dwelling on the influence which she exerts over her progeny at conception, during its embryotic and fetal existence, and especially during the susceptible periods of infancy and childhood, when man, by the admirable arrangements of Providence, is committed almost exclusively to the superintendence of woman. Add to this the influence, almost unbounded, which in future life she exerts over man, her nominal lord, by her beauty and grace, her sprightliness and wit, and especially by the depth and devotedness of her affections.

It was maintained that woman requires assistance in childbirth, as accidents may, at any moment, occur, involving the life of mother or child, or of both; that this truth was not nullified by the fact that females often deliver themselves safely, and that the inferior order of animals have usually favorable labors.

It was shown that there are important anatomical, physiological, and moral reasons, why parturition in the human female should be more difficult and dangerous than among animals of an inferior grade; and it was also, I may say, demonstrated that dangerous and often fatal complications of labor arise from anatomical peculiarities of mother or child, from irregular or perverted states, or disturbances of her physiological functions; and especially from the existence of local or general disease.

Hence the absolute necessity of the science and practice of obstetrics to detect these dangers, and to protect and preserve a being so wonderfully constructed, so beautiful, so interesting, so moral, so intellectual, and so influential for good over the best interests of man, and over the destinies of nations, as woman, "the last, best gift of Heaven to man."

But, however important and valuable, however good and excellent a mother must be regarded, we must not forget her *offspring*, in the various stages of its existence, from the moment of its conception to delivery, and from birth to the full development of its physical and moral nature.

In a most mysterious manner brought into existence, how wonderful its formation! Imperfect in the first instance, yea, even invisible to the naked eye, the embryo is nevertheless endowed, at once, with the principles of vitality; and, although retained within the system of its mother, it has, in a strict sense, an independent existence. It immediately manifests all the phenomena of *organic* life; it forms its own fluids, and circulates them; it is nourished and developed; and, very rapidly, from being a *rude indigestaque moles*, apparently, an inorganic drop of fluid, its organs are generated and its form perfected. It daily gains strength and grows; and, while still within the organ of its mother, manifests some of the phenomena of animal life, especially as regards mobility. After the fourth month its motions are perceptible to the mother, and in a short period can be perceived by other individuals on due investigation.

From certain facts, it is also inferred that the foetus has perception in *utero*, the sense of *tact*; and, moreover, that at this time it has its organs, relating to animal life, in such a state that they will act when they meet with their appropriate stimuli. Hence, children born during either of the last three months of *utero-gestation*, very generally survive: their brain, nerves, and senses being sufficiently developed to receive without injury appropriate impressions from natural stimuli. It is a *living being*.

Moreover, facts, in great numbers, can readily be produced, which positively prove that there is no direct communication between the foetus (even in its earliest embryotic and most imperfect state), and the mother whose organs contain it. Surrounded by fluids and membranes, it derives from its mother the materials for support and growth, and a *nidus*, or spot, where it shall be protected from physical injury. Similar to the *chick in ovo*, it is, therefore, not only a living, but an independent being; and, as it will be universally acknowledged that the father has no influence over his offspring after the moment of conception, the same is true as regards the mother. All the peculiarities which a mother impresses on her offspring (and they are numerous and wonderful) are imparted *at* or *before* the moment of conception, by means of the original germ formed in her ovary. The embryo thus generated by germs from each parent has henceforth an independent existence. As regards its *vital properties*, it is as perfect as it ever will be; its subsequent

nutrition, growth, susceptibilities, are but the successive manifestations of these vital properties. As the acorn, removed from the towering oak, and dropped into the earth, is capable of vegetating and producing, in due time, under favorable circumstances, by its own inherent powers, another oak, similar in size and grandeur to that from which the acorn fell; so the embryo, by its own innate vital properties, received at the moment of fecundation, is gradually developed in *utero*, from its incipient state of existence (*punctum saliens*) to that of the perfect foetus at the full period of utero-gestation. Physiologically, therefore, the infant after birth, while deriving all its nourishment and means of support from the breasts of its mother, cannot be regarded as more independent than the foetus in *utero*. The child unborn absorbs nourishment from its parent through the medium of the uterus. After birth, it imbibes the materials for nutrition by means of the mammae, or breasts. There is essentially no difference in its physiological properties, or as to the independent character of its existence, whether it remains in the uterus or is supported by the mother out of the uterus.

The observations now made are applicable to all animated beings, to plants and animals, to the lower and higher orders of vital existences; but we must bear in mind the trite adage, that "like produces like;" that the offspring resembles the parent in all essential points. Hence, the human embryo is to be regarded, not merely as representing the animal existence of its parents, but as possessing an intellectual and moral nature. Wonderful as is the formation of the body of the foetus, with all its susceptibilities, with its organic and animal life; still more mysterious is the transmission of an intellectual, moral, yea, a spiritual nature from parent to child.

Of this, there can be no reasonable doubt. As the infant grows, it speedily manifests intelligence and moral feelings. It thinks, it reasons, it acts under the influence of its thoughts and its moral perceptions, as they are successively developed. Whose observation has been so obtuse, as not to observe the mental characteristics of the father or the mother in the child; in its modes of thinking, feeling, speaking, moving; yea, in the very expression of its countenance, and the peculiar attitudes and motions of its body. Who has not noticed the transmission, from generation to

generation, of certain peculiarities of mental and moral character in families; so decided a transmission as not to be destroyed even by constant intermarriages.

The child, therefore, must, and does receive an intellectual, a spiritual existence from its parents—from both parents. The influences of one modifying those of the other; sometimes those of the father—sometimes those of the mother, preponderating.

It is not, therefore, a mere brute, to enjoy its vegetative and animal existence; to be governed by its sensations and instincts; to live as its progenitors lived, and die as they died. No, it is a human being; it has its animal nature; it has its spiritual existence. It is capable of thought, of reflection; it has a perception of that which is beautiful, of that which is right—of that which is wrong, of virtue and vice. It has a *moral nature*; a *conscience*; its mind and heart are capable of steady, of permanent improvement; it has high intellectual and moral aspirations. It is not satisfied with the past or the present. It stretches its views, its desires, through, yea, beyond this lower world; it penetrates the very heavens in its restless activity, and rejoices in the hope that there it shall find nobler and purer spirits, in whose companionship its now insatiable desires may possibly be satisfied. It knows and feels its spiritual existence, and that this existence is capable of infinite improvement, and of infinite duration.

When, however, does this mystical union between the animal and spiritual nature of the human being occur? Is it at the *time of birth*; at *quickening* in *utero*, or at the *time of conception*?

Here the imagination of man has been very busy. Vain speculations have existed as to the moral nature; yea, even as to the great question of the moral accountability of unborn children. The medical philosopher, or rather metaphysician (for the boundaries of true philosophy have been transgressed), and also the professed theologian, have given reins to their imagination, and speculated freely as to the question, when does the union occur between the soul and body, between our corporeal and spiritual natures? This has been regarded, also, as involving the question of the perfect vitality of the *fœtus*, as *prior* to this union it (the *fœtus*) was considered by many *inanimate*, or at best, but a portion of the mother, *par matris viscerum*. After the junction, it was regarded as a perfect human being; possessing a moral, as

well as a physical character. On this subject, there are, and have been, many extravagances. Hippocrates supposed animation occurred from thirty to forty-two days after conception. The Stoics, on the contrary, maintained that there was no proper or perfect vitality until after birth, and the establishment of respiration. The Academicians maintained that life was imparted during gestation, and hence, even the Church of Rome speaks of *animate* and *inanimate* foetuses. According to some, this animation occurred in three days; according to others, in seven days; according to others, at the fortieth or sixtieth day, when the pullulation, or organization of the foetus was completed.

The usual impression, and one which is probably still maintained by the mass of the community, is that the embryo is perfected at the period of quickening; say the one hundred and twelfth, or one hundred and twentieth day. When the mother first perceives motion, is considered the period when the foetus becomes animated; when it receives its spiritual nature into union with its corporeal.

These, and similar suppositions are, as has been already shown, contrary to all fact, to analogy, to reason; and if it were not for the high authorities, medical, legal, and theological, in opposition, we might add, to common sense.

What, it may be asked, have the sensations of the mother to do with the vitality of the child? Is it not alive because the mother does not feel it? Every practitioner of Obstetrics can bear witness that children live and move and thrive long before the mother is conscious of its existence; and that women have carried healthy living children to the seventh, and even to the ninth month without being conscious of its motions. Moreover, how can a foetus be termed *inanimate* when it grows, of course is nourished, and manifests all the phenomena of life? The supposition of inanimate embryos capable of being developed, is, at the present day, an absurdity. From the moment of conception it must be alive, for immediately it begins to be developed; it is separated, as you will hereafter learn, from the ovary, where it was generated, and travels, some three or four inches, through a narrow tube or canal, to the uterus, as much disconnected from the mother as the chick in ovo is separated from the parent hen. Its subsequent attachments to the mother, by means of the pla-

centa and uterus, are so indirect (as will be hereafter demonstrated), that we are justified in asserting that the mother has little more influence upon the child in *utero* than the parent bird has upon its offspring in the egg.

If the question, therefore, be returned upon us, when does that mystical union between our corporeal and spiritual nature, between matter and spirit, body and soul occur? We answer, at the time of *conception*. It is then only, the father can, in any way, exert an influence over his offspring; it is then only the female germ is in direct union with the mother; the connection afterwards is indirect and imperfect. To suppose that the body only is generated at conception, and that the spirit is subsequently added, is, in the absence of all direct revelation on the subject, philosophically untrue, being at variance with the facts and with reason, as has already been illustrated and enforced.

I have been led into this discussion, gentlemen, rather further than I anticipated, but not further than its importance demands. It is, in all respects, interesting and important. The opinions of medical men on these subjects regulate public sentiment, govern the tribunals of justice, and influence even the minds of the mental philosopher and the scrutinizing theologian. As respects the subject of the vitality of the foetus in *utero*, unfortunately, the inconsiderate speculations of physiologists have become the foundation on which legislators have constructed laws, and the moralist promulgated rules, regulating human sentiments and conduct, on the interesting and important subjects of abortion or premature labor. If the embryo and foetus be, as the Stoicks supposed, merely *portio matris viscerum*; if it be not possessed of a sentient principle, a living soul, until the period of actual delivery, then all attempts to procure abortion or premature labor, to destroy the embryo or foetus in *utero*, are comparatively venial. Instead of being regarded as a crime of the darkest dye, a crime involving human life, human happiness, and the best interests of society, it is a mere "*misdemeanor*," hardly to be noticed or punishable in the slightest manner. Hence, most of the ancient and modern laws do not protect the foetus in *utero* on the principle of an independent existence. They merely regard the attempt to destroy it as an injury to the mother, to be punished according to the kind and degree of injury thus inflicted on the parent. About the year

692, a very different sentiment was promulgated and supported in the Roman Empire; so that, by a council and decree of the Emperor, the procuring of an abortion was *homicide*—murder—to be punished with death.

"In France, the Roman law was adopted, and the parliaments frequently condemned midwives to be hanged for procuring the abortion of girls; and physicians, surgeons, and others guilty of this crime, were subjected to the same punishment."*

This continued until the period of the Revolution, when the punishment of death was transmuted to imprisonment for twenty years; and by the Napoleon Code, in 1810, the degree of punishment was still further lessened.

In England, the "common law" (which is also adopted by the tribunals of justice in our country), as laid down by the celebrated Blackstone, is founded, as regards this subject, on the erroneous and still prevalent idea that the foetus, prior to quickening, is in a different state than it is when this event has occurred. Hence the English law does not even notice the crime of procuring abortion before quickening; and even after this epoch, affirms that it is not murder but a serious misdemeanor. *In rerum natura non, "killing is no murder."*

The good sense and virtuous feelings of the English nation have, however, interposed direct statutes to supply this deficiency of the common law. By the Ellenborough Act, under George the Third, in 1803, it was ordained that the procuring of an abortion of a female *not quick* with child, is felony, to be punished by fine, imprisonment, or exposure in the pillory, or that the criminal may be publicly or privately whipped or transported beyond the sea for any term not exceeding fourteen years. The same act also declares that to procure abortion *after quickening* is murder, to be punishable with death. This was afterwards modified by an act under George the Fourth. Lately, under Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, the whole subject has been revised, and more correct legislation has ensued, protecting the foetus from the time of conception, drawing no distinction whether the mother be quick with child or not. By the present law, therefore, of England, the procuring of abortion, at any period of pregnancy, is *felony*, to be

* Beck, Med. Jurisp. vol. i. p. 275.

punished by transportation for fifteen years, or for life, or by imprisonment for three years.

In our own country, this important subject has, most strangely, escaped the notice of our innumerable legislators. There has been but little legislation on the subject. We are governed by the "common law" of England in this respect. Hence, criminal abortion is regarded merely as a misdemeanor, punishable by fine and imprisonment. In Massachusetts, it is not even an indictable offence, prior to quickening. At common law, it is not punishable at all, if done before quickening, and with the consent of the mother. The State of New York has, however, been aroused from this indifference to human life, and has presented a better example to her confederates in our Federal Union. By her revised statutes, criminal abortion, before quickening, is punishable by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, and imprisonment for one year. If the woman be quick, then it is punishable as manslaughter in the second degree.

We trust this is the commencement of better things, and that our various legislators will, in rapid succession, enact laws with suitable penalties, founded on correct philosophical views of the reality and importance of the life of the child in *utero*; that it is truly a perfect *human being*, and that its criminal destruction is *murder*.

It ought, however, to be added that, by the common law, if the mother perish in consequence of an attempt to destroy the product of conception, the perpetrator of this barbarous act is regarded as a murderer, although he had no intention to injure the parent. Judge King, of this city, in a charge delivered to a jury, on a trial for murder of the mother, caused by procuring abortion, declares that, at "common law," the crime is murder. "Every act of procuring abortion," he says, "is murder, whether the person perpetrating such act intended to kill the woman, or merely feloniously to destroy the fruit of her womb." The procuring abortion is "a base and unmanly act;" it is a crime against the natural feelings of man—against the welfare and safety of females—against the peace and prosperity of society—against the divine command—"Thou shalt not kill." It is murder.

It is in vain to evade this conclusion. As far as human investigation has gone, or probably ever will go, in penetrating the

mysterious function of generation; as far as the light of reason, or the torch of Revelation has elucidated the subject; there can be no reasonable doubt that human existence, corporeally and spiritually, commences, not with the birth of the *fœtus* and the first inspiration, but at conception; when the germs furnished by both parents are quickened into life.

Nutrition, growth, the development of organs, the successive display of organic, animal, intellectual, moral, and spiritual functions, are but the successive manifestations of that mysterious principle of life, the gift of the Creator, which, feeble as it may be when first exerted within the dark impenetrable recesses of the mother's system, daily and hourly gains strength and energy, continually developing new organs and new functions, until, under its plastic and reviving influences, the invisible product of conception is developed, grows, passes through the embryotic and *foetal* stages of existence, appears as the breathing and lovely infant, the active, the intelligent boy, the studious and moral youth, the adult man, rejoicing in the plenitude of his corporeal strength and intellectual powers, capable of moral and spiritual enjoyments; and finally, in this world, as the aged man, whose system is preparing for new transformations, which, however humbling they may at first appear to the pride of man, and however apparently destructive to his corporeal and intellectual existence, are but the precursors of that glorious change, when, as Revelation teaches, "these natural bodies shall become spiritual bodies," "when this corruptible shall put on incorruption," when changes will be effected infinitely greater and more mysterious than occur at conception, and during gestation, and when it will be found that the existence commenced in the ovary of a woman, mysterious and wonderful as it may be, is but the commencement of a series of changes, each more wonderful and glorious than its predecessor, to which the *same identical human being* will be subjected, perhaps for eternity.

These simple truths, almost self-evident, and which might be easily deduced from *à priori* reasoning, have been strangely neglected by medical men, and of course by legislators, moralists, and other influential individuals, who give tone to the feelings of society.

We need not wander far for proofs of this assertion. The

history of almost every nation is blackened by the hideous, unnatural crime of *infanticide*.

You have all read of the horrible sacrifices of infants among barbarous nations, to appease or propitiate their idol gods. You know that Greeks and Romans, with all their boasted wisdom and refinement, habitually exposed their infants to the most terrible deaths; that this crime is not forgotten in modern times; that among nations, deprived of the light of Christianity, the sacrifices and the wanton destruction of infants still prevail, whether we extend our view to Asia, Africa, or America, or the islands of the sea.

Criminal abortion is almost as prevalent. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, alludes to the potions taken by wicked women, or administered by still more wicked and detestable men, to procure delivery. The females of Rome have their depravity, in this respect, recorded on a monument, *perennius ære*, the Satires of Juvenal.

Would, gentlemen, that we could exonerate the *moderns* from guilt on this subject! It is, however, a mournful fact, which ought to be promulgated, that this crime, this mode of committing murder, is prevalent among the most intelligent, refined, moral, and Christian communities.

We blush, while we record the fact, that in this country, in our cities and towns, in this city, where literature, science, morality, and Christianity are supposed to have so much influence; where all the domestic and social virtues are reported as being in full and delightful exercise; even here individuals, male and female, exist, who are continually imbruining their hands and consciences in the blood of unborn infants; yea, even *medical* men are to be found, who, for some trifling pecuniary recompense, will poison the fountains of life, or forcibly induce labor, to the certain destruction of the foetus, and not unfrequently of its parent.

So low, gentlemen, is the moral sense of the community on this subject; so ignorant are the greater number of individuals, that even mothers, in many instances, shrink not from the commission of this crime, but will voluntarily destroy their own progeny, in violation of every natural sentiment, and in opposition to the laws of God and man. Perhaps there are few individuals, in extensive practice as obstetricians, who have not had frequent

applications made to them by the fathers or mothers of unborn children (respectable and polite in their general appearance and manners), to destroy the fruit of illicit pleasure, under the vain hope of preserving their reputation by this unnatural and guilty sacrifice.

Married women, also, from the fear of labor, from indisposition to have the care, the expense, or the trouble of children, or some other motive equally trifling and degrading, have solicited that the embryo should be destroyed by their medical attendant. And when such individuals are informed of the nature of the transaction, there is an expression of real or pretended surprise that any one should deem the act improper—much more guilty; yea, in spite even of the solemn warning of the physician, they will resort to the debased and murderous charlatan, who, for a piece of silver, will annihilate the life of a foetus, and endanger even that of its ignorant or guilty mother.

This low estimate of the importance of foetal life is by no means restricted to the ignorant, or to the lower classes of society. Educated, refined, and fashionable women—yea, in many instances, women whose moral character is, in other respects, without reproach; mothers who are devoted, with an ardent and self-denying affection, to the children who already constitute their family, are perfectly indifferent respecting the foetus in utero. They seem not to realize that the being within them is indeed *animate*—that it is, in verity, a *human being*—body and spirit; that it is of importance, that its value is inestimable, having reference to this world and the next. Hence, they in every way neglect *its* interests. They eat and drink; they walk and ride; they will practise no self-restraint, but will indulge every caprice, every passion, utterly regardless of the unseen and unloved embryo. They act with as much indifference as if the living, intelligent, immortal existence lodged within their organs, were of no more value than the bread eaten, or the common excretions of the system. Even in cases where mothers have suffered from repeated abortions, where foetus after foetus has perished through their neglect or carelessness, and where even their own health is involved in the issue, even in such cases every obstetrician can bear testimony to the great difficulty of inducing our wayward patients to forego certain gratifications, to practise certain self-

denials, and to adopt efficient means for the salvation of the child.

This is not all. We can bear testimony, that, in some instances, the woman who has been well educated, who occupies high stations in society, whose influence over others is great, and whose character has not been impugned, will deliberately resort to any and every measure which may effectually destroy her unborn offspring. Ashamed, or afraid, to apply to the charlatan, who sustains his existence by the price of blood, dreading it may be publicity, she recklessly and boldly adopts measures, however severe and dangerous, for the accomplishment of her unnatural, her guilty purpose. She will make extra muscular efforts by long fatiguing walks, by dancing, running, jumping, kept up as long as possible; she will swallow the most nauseous, irritating, and poisonous drugs, and in some instances, will actually arm herself with the surgeon's instrument, and operate upon her own body, that she may be delivered of an embryo, for which she has no desire, and whose birth and appearance she dreads.

These facts are horrible, but they are too frequent, and too true. Often, very often, must all the eloquence and all the authority of the practitioner be employed; often he must, as it were, grasp the conscience of his weak and erring patient, and let her know, in language not to be misunderstood, that she is responsible to her Creator for the life of the being within her.

After this exposition, and the details which have been given, and especially in view of the influence which medical science must exert on these questions, it seems hardly necessary to repeat, that physicians, medical men, must be regarded as the guardians of the rights of infants. They alone can rectify public opinion; they alone can present the subject in such a manner that legislators can exercise their powers aright in the preparation of suitable laws; that moralists and theologians can be furnished with facts to enforce the truth on this subject upon the moral sense of the community, so that not only may the crime of infanticide be abolished, but that criminal abortion be properly reprehended, and that women, in every rank and condition of life may be sensible of the value of the embryo and foetus, and of the high responsibility which rests on the parents of every unborn infant.

While thus advocating, in this place, the importance of Obstet-

tric science, as bearing on the welfare of women and of children, and hence on the best interests of society; while presenting myself, as an advocate, as well as one of the physical guardians of the rights of infants, it is with no ordinary satisfaction that I can survey such an assemblage of intelligent and educated young men as are here collected, who have devoted themselves to the pursuit of a science so exalted, so noble, so useful as that of medicine; who, with an ardent enthusiasm, have determined to wage a war of extermination against any and every opinion and practice which in any degree infringes on the rights of women and their offspring.

In this glorious work I bid you prosper. Your rewards may not be riches and honor, but they will be more valuable and enduring, arising from the smiles of an approving conscience, and the blessing of that Being who has pronounced the severest curse on the crime of murder.